

Decision Digest

Edition 145

Monthly summary of the decisions taken at meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny and other Panels for the period 1st May to 31st May 2014.

THE FUTURE OF MEMBERS IT – CALL IN

Following the publication of the Cabinet's decision regarding the future of Members IT on 10th April 2014, the Overview & Scrutiny Panel has given the matter further consideration.

Following a lengthy discussion, the Panel has recommended that for the purposes of clarifying what is intended, the Cabinet should amend their decisions, such that –

- ❖ printed agendas and reports will be provided on requested; and
- ❖ from a date to be determined, it be compulsory for all elected councillors to use the new arrangements and that Members will be entitled to participate in the loan scheme if they wish to do so to purchase an iPad.

The Panel is also of the view that the Cabinet should verify whether the terms of the Constitution, particularly the Members Allowances Scheme (and the associated guidelines) are sound and reflect the requirements of the new arrangements. If changes are required a review should be undertaken and implemented in the normal way.

In discussing the Panel's views, the Cabinet were of the opinion that the Panel's recommendations were too prescriptive and did not offer the flexibility of the approved scheme.

Executive Councillors confirmed that those Members wishing to receive a printed agenda will be able to and the minimum requirement for participation in the scheme is the ownership of a desk based PC.

Having referred to the potential savings the scheme offered and the need to gain Public Services Network compliance, the Cabinet has reaffirmed their previous decision relating to the withdrawal of Council funded IT equipment for Members.

RECRUITMENT TO SENIOR POSTS

Following the completion of an exercise to restructure the Council's senior management arrangements, the Panel has interviewed short-listed candidates for seven newly established posts.

On completion of the final interviews, the Panel has made appointments to the following positions –

- ❖ Corporate Director (Services);
- ❖ Corporate Director (Delivery);
- ❖ Head of Community;
- ❖ Head of Leisure & Health;
- ❖ Head of Resources;
- ❖ Head of Development; and
- ❖ Head of Customer Services.

These appointments have been reported to the Cabinet who have raised no objection to them in accordance with the Officer Employment Rules.

REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION

The Corporate Governance Panel has endorsed a number of recommendations which were referred to the Council in relation to proposed changes to the Constitution. These involved arrangements for headline debates, the Green Paper, frequency of meetings, Annual State of the District Address, the value of procurement requirements, the role of the Council Programme Group and the streamlining of reports to the Council from the Cabinet, Panels and Committees.

REVIEW OF FRAUD INVESTIGATION ACTIVITY

The activities of the Corporate Fraud Team during 2013/14 have been reviewed by the Corporate Governance Panel.

The Team faces a number of changes due to the launch of a Single Fraud Investigation Service by the Department for Work and Pensions' which will become operational in March 2015. The Service will take over all welfare fraud investigations.

REVIEW OF THE INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE

The attention of the Corporate Governance Panel has been drawn to the outcome of a review of the effectiveness of the Internal Audit Service, undertaken by Mr Richard Gaughran, Internal Audit Manager with the Welland Internal Audit Consortium.

The review had concluded that internal audit was effective in delivering credible assurance to stakeholders, improved management of risks, improved corporate governance arrangements and

support for the achievement of corporate objectives.

In discussing a suggestion that the Panel should hold to account Officers who fail to implement agreed audit recommendations, Members have expressed their disappointment that this remains an issue for the authority. Owing to their concerns, the Panel has agreed that where audit actions have not been implemented on time, the relevant Assistant Director should attend a meeting of the Panel to explain the reasons for their non-introduction.

INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE: ANNUAL REPORT

Members of the Corporate Governance Panel have been provided with the Internal Audit Manager's opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's internal control and governance processes.

In expressing disappointment that nine "limited" and one "little" assurance have been issued, the Panel has suggested that their concerns be addressed by the Managing Director at their next meeting.

PROGRESS ON ISSUES ARISING FROM THE 2012/13 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Progress made to date in respect of six areas of improvement identified in the 2012/13 Annual Governance Statement has been noted by the Corporate Governance Panel.

GRANT CERTIFICATION 2013/14

A report from the External Auditor detailing the certification of specific grants received by the Council in

2013/14 has been presented to the Corporate Governance Panel.

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

Following discussions 30th April 2014, the Panel has given further considerations to the content of the Employee Handbook. Having considered a number of changes to the text and in noting that the document will be considered by the Employment Panel on 25th June, Members have authorised the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Panel to review the final version of the handbook with a view to resubmitting it to the Council for adoption on 30th July

MONITORING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CONTROL ENVIRONMENT: VALUE FOR MONEY

The Corporate Governance Panel has requested the Council's designated Chief Financial Officer to provide them with an annual report summarising the arrangements in place to support the achievement of Value for Money (VfM) for the Council. Although, the Panel has routinely received information from both the internal and external auditors on VfM the Council does not have a specific framework/strategy that outlines how this will be achieved. This new arrangement will introduce a process whereby the Panel can be assured that work has been undertaken to show that the Council is achieving VfM.

TRAINING OF PANEL MEMBERS

Suggestions for training for the Corporate Governance Panel based on the anticipated work programme over the ensuing year have been noted. A formal training day is to be arranged for all Members involved in the Audit Process across Cambridgeshire.